

Rising Tides- Nurturing Our Gifted Culture

3-5 August, Wellington

Attended by Justine Menzies-Wilson

The conference logo was:

A rising tide lifts all ships." Joseph Renzulli

(This incorporates the concept of differentiation, and emphasises how we can improve all students' learning.)

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Joseph Renzulli is a Professor at the University of Connecticut, Neag Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development and Director, National Research Center on Gifted and Talented.

His conceptual and educational Models: The Three-Ring Concept of Giftedness and The Enrichment Triad Mode are widely acknowledged and used worldwide.

The opening address was by the Minister of Education, Steve Maharey who spoke about 'Personalised Learning', which we understand as 'differentiated learning'.

He spoke about the government's commitment to nurturing our Gifted and Talented students by having them properly educated. He focused on looking after their needs as best we can.

My only question here is, that after putting a lot of time, money and resourcing into developing these skills and talents, how are we going to ensure that they stay in NZ? What provisions will be made to ensure this? (Unfortunately, there were no opportunities for questions.)

Keynote Address: Dr Nicholas Colangelo, University of Iowa, USA

- What do we want for our children? This is **the** most important question.
- We need a vision for NZ.
- The USA has met the needs of G and T through 'reactive', not planned concepts.

The presentation detailed the history of the United States of America's journey through Gifted Education. The main concepts are listed below. Each came with its own set of constraints. (See below).

1. National Security / Threat

The Russians beat them in the space race and this prompted a drive.

2. Sports / Competition Models

3. Special Education / Exceptionality- (1980s) Recognition of 'twice exceptional' students.

4. Equity- (1993 National Excellence Report) the view that equity is an issue in giftedness.

5. Victim / At Risk- (1990s-2000) The recognition of social and psychological barriers and the recognition of G and T as possibly 'at risk.'

6. Talent Development (2006- Rising Tides Lift All Vessels) This is also applicable to the NZ context with Nag 1. There are special schools in the USA for the gifted.

"Identity and Whakapapa"

Melinda Webber (University of Auckland)

Some of the main points from the presentation are outlined below.

- "Maori are under-represented and under-participate. We need to reflect Maori content, values and practices and reflect Maori conceptions."
- A single definition of giftedness is unrealistic. We need to look at individual tribes and for them to set their own criteria.
- Teachers should create a context for learning that responds to the culture that the children bring to the classroom.
- The term 'Maori' itself attracts debate today as it is often used as a homogenous term for all tribal groups and therefore obscures the distinguishing characteristics of each tribe.
- We need to look carefully at the concept of whakawhānau.
- As treaty partners we should be supporting each other, we are responsible to each other.

The importance of identifying and nurturing the gifts and talents of all tamariki in Aotearoa is widely accepted in education circles. The continued under-representation of Maori students in Gifted and Talented programmes, indicates the need to ensure our understandings about the way children learn, and the corresponding teaching strategies, reflect Maori conceptions, values and practices.

Research shows that cultural practice, tribal structures and whakapapa are all significant in the development of Maori identity (Durie, 2002; Murchie, 1984; Broughton, 1993; Moeke-Pickering, 1996).

Where Maori children are encouraged to use their own whanau/hapu/tribe as a starting point for better understanding what giftedness means for both their cultural and educational lives, they will feel empowered to embrace the gifts they possess and use them to progress educationally, culturally and spiritually. The workshop explored how the use of Te Arawa, Ngāti Whakaaue whakapapa has been used as a model for potential teaching and learning programmes for gifted and talented learners.

"Meeting the Needs of Gifted in the Regular Classroom"

Graham Watts, St Cuthbert's College

Gifted students are entitled to have their learning needs met throughout their schooling. Teachers are to be encouraged to recognize the needs of the gifted in their classes and design a curriculum that provides challenge and rigor. Achieving this requires a willingness to customise teaching and learning activities to meet the individual needs of the gifted within their class.

This workshop illustrated how curriculum models have been applied to classroom learning. Units of work, lesson examples and digital resources were shown that have been customized to meet the needs of the gifted in the regular classroom.

Practical strategies to make classroom provision simple but effective were shared. Examples came from a variety of subjects across Years 1 -13.

A range of provisions have been developed including: Withdrawal groups, in-class support, differentiated learning and acceleration programmes. Several online resources have been developed.

The Key Team will spend some time looking at these and discussing their viability. We need to remember that St. Cuthbert's have an enormous budget and a full time facilitator.

Panel Discussion: "Talent and Passion: Tales From the Business World"

This was a general discussion from innovators and creative, successful young entrepreneurs. They spoke about their passions, their motivation, their inspiration, and the people who helped them to achieve their dreams.

"Understanding and Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs for Gifted Children"

Lynn Berresford, The Assessment and Counselling Centre

Gifted and talented children are complex, highly sensitive individuals who often face daunting challenges in adjusting to life, at school, amongst other children and even at home at times. It is uncomfortable and sometimes painful to be statistically different from your age peers in our New Zealand culture. Gifted children develop excellent coping strategies, which can be to their advantage but often disadvantage them. They can be both fascinating and challenging to live with and / or teach.

This presentation looked at the social and emotional needs of gifted and twice-exceptional children and how this impacts, on the behaviour we see at home and at school. The focus was on how to be a 'proactive parent' and / or a 'healing teacher' and introduced effective strategies for good communication with gifted children and practical ways to help the parent, the teacher and the child develop a positive approach to the issues they encounter.

"Visual Spatial Giftedness: At School and Home" Kristin Joy, Massey University

Children who are gifted within the visual spatial domain are uniquely wired to see the world and their thoughts in a multi-dimensional way. The holistic perception of complex relationships creates a big picture, where patterns and systems are highlighted, often resulting in highly creative ideas and output. However, these same gifts can also be at odds with a phonologically based education system and an ordered household.

Through the exploration of definitions, cognitive characteristics and behaviours reported in literature in this field, a profile is developed with which such children can be identified. This will be enhanced by participants' observations and experiences with gifted children.

Five key principles of program provision for students gifted in the visual spatial domain within the school setting are outlined; with reference to Renzulli's model of differentiation. This included a discussion of the impact of this giftedness on phonological processing, sometimes leading to literacy and organisational difficulties. These are the kids that struggle with sequencing, they see the 'big picture' but often don't understand the steps to get there. Some key strategies for the child at home were discussed, and current literature is listed for further support.

www.visualspatial.org

www.hoagiesgifted.org/visual-spatial.htm

www.blender.org (3D software)

www.cubeengine.com (3D graphics)

www.multiplication.com

Any of A. Golan's books, especially, "Raising Topsy, Turvy Kids" (2004), The Visual-Spatial Classroom: Differentiation Strategies That Engage Every Learner" (2006), Linda Silverman's "Upside-Down Brilliance- The Visual-Spatial Learner". (See JM for a more comprehensive list).

“The Best Fit – Leading a Gifted and Talented Programme in a Large State Secondary School”

(Otumoetai College)

This seminar addressed the issue of how a large New Zealand co-education Secondary School has targeted a programme for their identified gifted and talented students. The college has formulated a Learning Policy to ensure theory becomes good practice and to aim for a sequential approach.

The issues of identification were considered giving emphasis to the use of a range of data. A talent pool has been identified in each learning area and the head of the identified learning area given freedom of organization and curriculum differentiation. From the identified talent pool a 'gifted' group (named Advanced Learner Group) has been established and meets together to forward their particular interests using available school and community resources. An annual learning retreat is held to establish social and working relationships between members of the Advanced Learning Group and to meet affective needs. Two staff are given a time allowance to work with this group.

“Developing Partnerships: ‘Get Me Out of Here!’ EOTC”

Deb Clark, Gifted Kids Programme

When asked about the highlight of their year at the Gifted Kids Programme, most of the students mentioned at least one of the EOTC opportunities provided as part of the programme. The students talked about how they love opportunities to get out of the classroom, they also talked about the value of these experiences for their learning and development of their talents.

The Gifted Kids Programme, aims to ensure that every learning experience, both in and out of the classroom, links with learning outcomes from our curriculum. By forming positive and collaborative relationships within the wider community, the Gifted Kids Programme has been able to provide meaningful learning experiences outside of the classroom for students. These experiences help to differentiate the curriculum in many ways. They provide GKP students with a variety of learning environments, students have access to advanced content by working with experts in different areas, and the learning process is adjusted to better match their learning needs and styles.

Schools regularly utilise EOTC opportunities to enhance learning for their students. By putting advanced thought into the ways in which these experiences can be used to support curriculum differentiation, EOTC can be a fantastic means of developing the talents of gifted students. The presentation included sharing from GKP students and from EOTC providers in Wellington - Victoria University, Capital E, Agresearch and the National Film Archive. It explained how partnerships have been formed to provide engaging and educational experiences for the students.

This workshop showed how to increase the value of EOTC activities for gifted students.

Keynote Address Dr Karen Rogers, GERRIC University of NSW
"These Four Things.....Using the Gifted Child's Strengths, Attitudes and Interests to Match Personal Priorities for Learning Options."

1. Opportunities for learning and socialising.
2. Compacting the regular curriculum
3. Providing opportunities for individual learning
4. Providing appropriate learning experiences in school.

Content must be modified using: Abstraction, complexity, variety.

Processes should be modified so that the child sees the value of some group products and learning but also learn the skills of effective, independent, self-directed learning.

Products should be varied, not just another oral or written report.

"ADHD or Gifted...or Both?"

Sheryl Burns, George Parkyn Centre

Many children who are diagnosed, and often misdiagnosed, as ADHD are in fact gifted.

Some diagnosed as gifted are in fact ADHD. Many are both gifted and ADHD.

The presentation included a comparison of characteristics of ADHD and the characteristics of gifted, and pointed out how easily the two can be confused.

- ADD / ADHD is caused by a neurological imbalance in the brain.
- It is a Hidden Disability
- DSM is a set of Criteria used to identify ADHD and must be completed by a specialist.
- Characteristics of ADD without Hyperactivity: Students often daydream, are often 'lost in thought', apathetic, sluggish or stare and are generally unmotivated.
- These students have most of the other characteristics but often fidget or are out of their seats.
- The loss of self-esteem is huge!! This is the most debilitating effect of the disorder.
- We must see the child as IN TROUBLE not the cause of trouble.
- Students with ADD/ADHD are not unable to learn

Teaching Strategies:

Students with ADD/ADHD will work you just need to include more kinaesthetic learning opportunities.

Classroom Organisation: try to make predictable routines in your classrooms, the opportunity to choose but not too much choice for activities, shorter work periods, send them on messages, give them positive reinforcement when they are on task. Use visual cues and references, allow more time for activities and tests. (get an assessment for Reader / Writer eligibility), Make sure that there is at least 1 task a day that they can succeed well in.

The main point of the presentation was to point out the high number of mis-diagnoses and to emphasise that each student needs to be considered as unique.

"An Introduction to Quality Circle Time"

Therese Hoyle, The Success Partnership Ltd.

The Quality Circle Time model is of immense value in the gifted and talented classroom. The model interweaves a range of ideas to promote positive behaviour, positive relationships and self-esteem. It works towards the goals of anti bullying and emotional literacy and enhances self-discipline and motivation.

In the gifted and talented classroom it acts as a forum for communication, philosophising and the discussion of challenging issues. It helps in the setting of rules and boundaries and aids conflict resolution. Most of all it's a time for every child's voice to be heard and for the building of respectful, supportive relationships where real learning and risk taking can take place.

It is a simple set of steps highlighting the use of school rules, incentives, sanctions, active listening and conflict resolution.

In summary, the concept lends itself better to the Primary classroom although aspects of the approach could work equally well in the senior school.

Dr Roger Moltzen

Dr Roger Moltzen is Foundation Chair of the Department of Human Development and Counselling, and Director of Special Education Programmes at the University of Waikato.

Roger is a former teacher and principal who teaches and researches in the areas of inclusive and gifted education. He has a particular interest in the development of talent across the lifespan.

Roger is co-author of "Gifted and Talented Students: Meeting their Needs in New Zealand Schools", and co-editor of "Gifted and Talented: New Zealand Perspectives" and "Learners with Special Needs in Aotearoa New Zealand".

"For many decades gifted education in New Zealand appeared to be making very little headway. On occasions it seemed becalmed on an ocean of apathy; at other times tossed about by the violent waves of antagonism. Despite such obstacles, there have always been those who have acted as beacons, who have provided a clear sense of direction, ensuring many gifted young people did not become shipwrecked. Unfortunately, in the absence of any coordinated approach to providing for the gifted, our efforts have remained patchy and inconsistent. The tide definitely changed in the mid-1990s, and has been rising ever since.

The challenge facing us now is to maintain that impetus. New Zealand is developing a new and indigenous approach to gifted education, which is already attracting interest from many other countries. Negotiating the way forward is not always straightforward, with numerous issues, dilemmas and competing ideas making navigating a challenge. Without a clear sense of direction we will render ourselves vulnerable to political, educational and economic wind shifts." *Roger Moltzen*